

WHAT WE GET WHEN WE GET CHRIST (Philippians 3:1-9)

When I first heard this term, I thought it was just a marketing ploy to get consumers to buy a product or some service. It is quite likely that somewhere along the way you have heard the phrase *value added*. There are many examples of how value is added.

Amazon offers free, two-day shipping. That's value added. Best Buy can send the Geek Squad to your home to set up the digital equipment you purchase. That's value added. Some car dealerships offer free oil changes for however long you own the vehicle when you buy a new one. That's value added.

Instead of being a marketing ploy, I think adding value is just good, business practice. Many people are willing to pay more if they know a certain store is going to excel at giving them world-class, customer service.

My ideas about value added changed when I heard John Maxwell give a talk some years ago. John Maxwell is an author, a retired pastor, and a leadership guru.

At a certain conference, he was being honored for his many years of faithful service to the Lord. He wasn't the main speaker at this conference, but after being recognized, he took a few minutes to address those who were in attendance. In his remarks, he said that people often come to him and say, "John, I want to be a leader." Whenever they do, he usually asks them, "Why do you want to be a leader? Do you want to be a leader to get a corner office? Do you want to be a leader to get a better parking space? Why do you want to be a leader?" He said the leadership is difficult, that it is often lonely. "Why do you want to be a leader?" He went on to say, "There is only one reason to be a leader and that is to add value to people." Leaders exist to add value to people, to make them more valuable.

Maxwell offered four ways to add value to people:

1. Value Them.
2. Make Yourself More Valuable.
3. Know and Relate to What People Value.
4. Value the Things That God Values.

I want you to know that God is all about adding value to people. God is the ultimate leader. Scripture portrays God as a loving Father, a powerful King, and a caring Shepherd. As our Leader, God adds value to us.

With the time we have and from today's passage, I want to show you "What We Get When We Get Christ." There are many things we get when we get Christ. I don't have time to tell you all of them. Accordingly, we are going to limit ourselves to today's passage. In Philippians 3:1-9, we see 3 things we get when we get Christ.

When We Get Christ, We Get His Kind of Joy

We have seen several times before that Philippians is the most joyful letter that Paul wrote. Even though Paul wrote this letter while he was under house arrest in Rome, and

even though Paul wrote this letter while he was chained to a Roman guard 24-hours a day, and even though Paul was not able to move about and travel freely, this letter drips with joy. In the span of 4 chapters, Paul refers to joy, gladness, or the like 16 times.

In v. 1, Paul returns to the oft-repeated theme of the letter. He commands us to rejoice in the Lord. This is a command. It is not a suggestion. It is not merely a good idea. It is not a helpful tip. We have before us an imperative sentence. Paul is telling us what to do. He is telling us to rejoice. Before he completes his letter, Paul is going to beat this drum some more. Look at 4:4.

According to Paul, when should we rejoice? Do we just rejoice when we come together on Sundays and sing joyful songs? Do we only rejoice when things go our way, and we are feeling good? We are told to rejoice always. That means we are to rejoice when it is Monday, and we would rather sleep in, but we've got get up and go to work, or go to school, or go to that doctor's appointment we have been dreading. To rejoice always means we are to rejoice when the car breaks down, when that unexpected bill comes in the mail, and when that bad news reaches your ears. Paul says we are to rejoice always.

The Lord's kind of joy is different from the world's kind of joy. The world's version of joy is circumstantial. It is a feeling we feel when our circumstances warrant it.

Instead of being circumstantial, the Lord's joy is perpetual. It is a river that never quits flowing. It is a spring that never quits bubbling up. It is a sun that never quits shining.

Have you ever thought about the fact that the sun never quits shining? Even if it is the middle of the night and black as can be outside your window, you can be certain that sun is still shining. You may have to wait a few hours for the earth to rotate a little more on its axis before you see the sun arise in the east, but the sun is still up there shining. It never quits.

There have been times I have boarded a plane when the weather was cloudy, even rainy, but before long, the plane rose about the cloud cover, and there it was. It was the sun shining in all of its glory.

So, keep on rejoicing even when it is cloudy, even when it is dark, even when you can't see the sun because the sun is still there, and it is still shining.

Likewise, God is still there, even when the circumstances obscure your view, even when the clouds gather, even when the darkness settles in for a time. Know that God is still there. Know that God is still good. Know that God is still on the throne. Know that God still loves you. He never quits.

Paul told us when to rejoice—always. He told us in what to rejoice. He didn't tell us to rejoice in our good looks, or in the abundance of our wealth or health. He didn't tell us to rejoice in our favorable circumstances. He told us to rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in His attributes. Rejoice in His actions. Rejoice in His plan. Rejoice in His promises. Rejoice in the Lord.

When you get Christ, you get His kind of joy. Jesus had much to say about joy. Jesus prayed for our joy in John 17, and He connected our joy with His word. He said to His Father, "But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they

may have My joy fulfilled in themselves” (17:13).

Earlier Jesus had spoken to His disciples about joy, and again, He connected that joy with His word. He said, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

As Jesus spoke to His disciples, He returned to the subject of joy, and that time He connected joy to answered prayer. He said, “Until now you have asked for nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

Jesus doesn’t want you to have just any joy. He wants you to have His joy. Jesus doesn’t want you to have some joy, or a little joy, or more joy than most. He wants your joy to be full, complete, filled to the brim and overflowing.

If you lack joy, let me ask you, “Are you reading His word? Are you praying in His name? Are you rejoicing in Him?”

The week before last, I attended a funeral here in Enid. The man who passed had been a pastor in our association. At the time that I became your pastor, the pastor at Garland Road Baptist Church was Greg Hook. Not long after I became your pastor, Greg had to resign because of the many health problems he was experiencing. I really don’t know all the medical battles that Greg faced, but I do know they were significant. I know they were painful. There were many times that I saw Greg either on crutches or in a wheel chair. I also know that Greg was one who rejoiced in the Lord.

It was only after his death that I learned some wonderful things about Greg. I discovered that as a younger man, Greg had been the accountant of a large company in the oil industry. Greg was making good money, and had he stayed with that company, he would have become a wealthy man. Greg, however, believed that God was calling him into ministry. He left that company to go to seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and he became the pastor of a small church in Kentucky. He went on to pastor two different churches here in NW Oklahoma—the FBC of Alva and later Garland Road.

I learned that despite his health problems, Greg kept a positive outlook. No matter how much pain he was experiencing and regardless of how tough the day was, if you asked Greg, “How are you doing?”, you always got the same reply, “I’m blessed.”

When you get Christ, you are blessed with His joy. Do you have His joy? If you lack His joy, you have to ask yourself whether or not you really have Christ. It is possible to get religion without getting Christ. It is possible to get a Christian upbringing without getting Christ. It is possible to get membership in a Christian church, even a Baptist church, without getting Christ. It is not possible to get Christ without getting His joy.

When We Get Christ, We Get His Perspective

In vv. 2-8 we see that Christ’s perspective is different from the perspective of others. It can even be different from those who are religious and claim to follow Him.

Notice the warning that Paul gives to the Philippian believers in v. 2. As you read v. 2 you see yellow lights flashing, and you heard a warning siren sounding. Three times in this short verse, Paul says, “Look out.”

When Paul calls them dogs, evil-doers, and those who mutilate the flesh, to who is

Paul referring? It is not 3 different groups. It is just one group that he describes in 3 different ways.

In the non-Jewish city of Philippi there were those who were saying, “If you want to become a Christian, then you have to adopt the Jewish way of doing things. You men have to be circumcised. You have to avoid unclean food. You have to live by the Jewish Law. Yes, you have to trust Christ, but simply trusting Christ is not enough. You must become Jewish.”

The people who were teaching this heresy are called Judaizers. Paul battled this perversion of the gospel in Galatians. In Galatians 3:1, Paul asks, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? . . . Let me ask only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

Almost 2,000 years have passed, but the spirit of the Judaizers is still around because there are those who preach that salvation is only attained by faith in Christ plus something else. Such people teach you can be saved by faith in Christ plus baptism, or plus church membership, or plus active participation in church ministry.

Still today, we are to heed Paul’s warning, “Look out! Look out for those who teach faith in Christ plus something else.”

Some 1400-plus years after Paul, the Reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others saw what was happening in the Catholic Church. The Church in Rome was teaching that salvation was had by faith in Christ plus something else. The Reformers protested. That is where we get the word *Protestant*. Protestants protest the teaching of Jesus plus something else for salvation. The watch words of the Reformation were grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone, and Glory to God alone.

James Boice wrote that those five doctrines are the doctrines that shook the world. Those five teaching shook the world because they are God’s perspective rather than man’s.

Now, 500 years after the Reformation, we need God to shake the world again with His truth; so, let’s speak His truth even though it clashes with what the world teaches and believes.

Paul shows how God’s perspective differs from ours in another way. We try to impress God and others with our credentials. We want to trot out our resume and show others how put together and accomplished we are. Whether or not others are impressed, the fact remain that God is not impressed.

Paul uses his own life as an example. There was a day when Paul was able to stand tall because of seven things he lists in vv. 5-6. Look at those things in which Paul once took pride. Of these seven accomplishments, most were inherited and some were achieved.

When I was a little boy, our family made a trip to Colorado. While we were there, we visited a portion of the Continental Divide. Every continent has a divide, but ours here in North American happens to be the longest at about 3,100 miles. My father explained the divide to me and my two brothers in a way that little boys could understand it. He explained that if we peed on this side, it would go westward to the Pacific Ocean, but if

we peed this side, it would eastward to the Atlantic Ocean or maybe southeastward to the Gulf of Mexico.

The continental divide, so to speak, of Philippians 3 is v. 7. Verse starts with a little word. It is just three letters in length. Although that word is small, it packs a big punch. In Paul's letter there are a number of what I call "big buts."

In the first three chapters of Romans Paul teaches that the Greeks are unrighteous, that the Jews are unrighteous, and that the whole world stands before God as unrighteous. Then, we come to Romans 3:21 where Paul writes, "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested . . ."

In Romans 6:23 we read bad news followed by good news, and that which stands between the two is a big but. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In Ephesians 2, Paul teaches that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. He stresses that we were children of wrath. He then comes to v. 4 where he writes, "But God, being rich in mercy . . ." and then he tells us what God, by His grace, did for us through His Son.

In much the same way, Philippians 3:7 starts with a big but and shows us a great reversal in Paul's perspective. He uses accounting terms. Paul has a great ledger book. In one column he lists his assets, and another column is labeled liabilities. In the asset column he has those seven accomplishments. In the liability column, there is just one item listed, and it is Jesus. It is because of Jesus that Paul is separated from his Jewish brethren who scorn him. It is on account of Jesus that he is in prison. It is because of Jesus that he is persecuted and mistreated wherever he goes.

Because his perspective has changed, Paul re-labels the top of both columns. He scratches out *assets* and renames them *liabilities*. He scratches out *liabilities* and names Jesus as his only asset. What he once thought were gains, he now views as being losses because for years they had kept him from Jesus.

Do you have any good things in your life that are keeping you from Jesus? In other words, what are some things that you take pride in that are actually hindering your walk with Christ? Could it be educational attainment, vocational success, financial independence, social recognition, or even religious practices?

In v. 8, Paul goes beyond viewing these former gains as losses. He employs a more dramatic word to describe them. The word has been variously translated as rubbish, garbage, refuse, but I think such words are rather weak. The word Paul used could be, and believe should be, rendered with a much stronger word. Paul wasn't talking about bits of garbage that could be thrown in the kitchen trash can. If what Paul was referring to was in your home, you would more likely flush it down the toilet. The translators didn't want to offend your sensibilities; so, they held back. They could have used words such as dung or excrement.

My goal is not to offend you, but I want you to get what Paul is really saying. Please forgive me if I am offensive, but what Paul is saying is, "What I once viewed as a source of pride, I now see as a bunch of crap. It's a pile of horse manure." That stuff doesn't matter anymore. What matters is gaining Christ.

Christ changes our perspective of what matters.

In my library I have a book entitled, *Hidden in Plain Sight*. It was written by a pastor, author, and seminary professor named Mark Buchanan. In the book, he includes a story about a woman named Tracy. He wrote:

Tracy is one of the worship leaders at our church. One Sunday, as she sat at the piano, she talked about the difficult week she'd just been through. It was chaotic, she said—a mess of petty crises on top of a rash of minor accidents, all mixed up in a soup can of crazy busyness. It had left her weary and cranky. She got up that Sunday to lead worship and felt spent, with nothing more to give.

However, Tracy's 8-year-old daughter, Brenna, helped her gain new perspective earlier that morning. When Tracy had walked into the living room, the window was covered with scrawl. Using a crayon, Brenna had scribbled something across the picture window, top to bottom and side to side.

At first, it seemed like one more mess for Tracy to clean up. Then she saw what Brenna had written: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindnece, goodnece, faithfulnece, gentlnece and selfcantrol* (in Brenna's delightful spelling).

Tracy stopped, drank it in. Her heart flooded with light. It was exactly what she needed to be reminded about: the gift of the fruit of the Spirit that arises, not by our circumstances, but by Christ within us.

And then Tracy noticed one more thing Brenna had written at the edge of the window: *Love one another*. Only Brenna, in her creative spelling, had written: *Love won another*.

Mark concluded: "It's what Jesus has been trying to tell us all along. You were won that way. Now go and do likewise."

Do you need a change of perspective? Does your thinking need to be re-oriented to God's way of thinking? When we get Christ, we get the mind of Christ. Over time, we begin to think like He thinks and value what He values.

When We Get Christ, We Get His Righteousness

Look at v. 9. The best thing we get when we get Christ is His righteousness. If we do not receive the righteousness of Jesus, we have no hope of going to heaven. Going to heaven is much more than just a matter of having your sins forgiven.

In Paul's letters he uses the image of taking off the old and putting on the new. You can't do the second until you do the first. If you purchase a new suit or a new dress, you can't wear it until you take off the old one.

We take off our old nature by repenting of our sin. Only then can we put on the new nature. That's what God accomplishes for us when we place our faith in Jesus. When we trust Jesus, God dresses us in the righteousness of His Son.

Righteousness means "standing in a right relationship with God." The NT consistently teaches that this right standing with God becomes ours through trusting Jesus and trusting in Him alone.

Do you remember the comic strip *Calvin and Hobbes*? Calvin is a little boy, and his friend Hobbes is a tiger. In one strip, the two are hurtling down a snowy slope on a sled. The two are having a discussion about sin.

Calvin: I'm getting nervous about Christmas.

Hobbes: You're worried you haven't been good?

Calvin: That's just the question. It's all relative. What's Santa's definition? How good do you have to be to qualify as good? I haven't killed anybody. That's good, right? I haven't committed any felonies. I didn't start any wars. ... Wouldn't you say that's pretty good? Wouldn't you say I should get lots of presents?

Hobbes: But maybe good is more than the absence of bad.

Calvin: See, that's what worries me.

Friend, if you are banking on the absence of bad to get you to heaven, like Calvin, you have good reason to be worried. We need to be dressed in His righteousness. That only comes through a having a relationship with Christ. When we trust Him as Lord and Savior, His Father clothes us with the righteousness of His Son.

God is all about adding value to those who belong to Him. It all starts with getting Christ. The rest comes as the outflow of having Him in your life. You are of great value to God, and that value only increases when you get Christ.

Do you remember the "Got Milk?" ads. It was a question, "Go milk?" You would see the picture of an athlete or some famous person. Whoever it was would have a milk mustache. It was a sure sign they had gotten milk.

I end today's message with a question: "Got Christ?" If you do, you won't be able to hide that fact. It will show all over your face and all over the way you live your life. Get Christ this morning, and make sure He has gotten you—all of you. Don't give Him a slice or a piece or a corner. Give all of yourself to Jesus. Give Him your sin. Give Him your hopes. Give Him your fears. Give Him your dreams. Give Him your heart.